

AER Committee 1 plenary meeting
Oppland, Lillehammer (N)
MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON TOURISM
28 February 2008, 9.00 – 10.15

DRAFT MINUTES (as at 3 March 2008)

Agenda items 1 to 3

The meeting was opened by **Thomas CARLSSON**, Tourism manager, Västerbotten, Chairman of the group.

The draft agenda for the meeting and the draft minutes of the last meeting (20 September 2007, Kazan, Tatarstan) were adopted unanimously.

Agenda item 4 - Update about AER tourism projects and partnerships

a- AER Interreg IVC PRESERVE (Peer Reviews for Sustainable Eco-Regions Via Europe) project

Agnès Ciccarone, AER Committee 1 Senior Policy Coordinator, presented the PRESERVE project, which was submitted for Interreg IVC funding at the occasion of the last call, closed on 15 January 2008. AER is lead partner of this project which counts 14 partners from 11 countries in total. The aim of PRESERVE is to improve the effectiveness of regional development policies, specifically focusing upon cultural heritage and landscape policies as endogenous factors of economic development.

The PRESERVE concept developed as a logical progression of an exchange on a core regional development issue: 14 regional and local representatives from 11 different countries - representing old and new member states and a wide EU-geographical coverage - gathered and discussed the difficulties they faced when implementing cultural heritage and landscape policies, and decided to join forces with the AER in this project.

Using common evaluation methodologies, the exchange of best practice, and audits from other regional experts (Peer Reviews), the regional policymakers will be able to develop a work plan which will enable them to apply the recommendations and improve their cultural heritage and landscape policies.

The power point presentation of this project is available among the working documents for the meeting, on the AER intranet under:

<http://www.aer.eu/events/regional-policies-committee/2008/spring-plenary-meeting.html>

(Working group tourism)

Please note that you need to be logged in to access the documents!

An answer from the Lille joint Technical Secretariat on the success of our application is expected by June 2008.

b- Cooperation with the International Bureau for Social Tourism (BITS)

Agnès Ciccarone reminded the participants that AER has signed a partnership convention with BITS at the AER General Assembly in Udine, Friuli Venezia Giulia (I), in November 2007. The text of this convention is available online under:

<http://www.aer.eu/main-issues/tourism.html>

In the framework of this convention, the two organisations committed to cooperate on their respective initiatives. An expert from the BITS, Eric Svoboda, took part in this context in the AER peer review on tourism held in Kazan, Tatarstan, from 11 to 15 February 2008. AER is now invited to appoint a speaker at the BITS Conference on sustainable tourism and climate change in Mediterranean areas, to be held on 22-23 May in Barcelona. Furthermore, AER is invited to take part in the World Congress of Social Tourism, to be held in Quebec from 6 to 9 October 2008.

With regards to social tourism, Thomas Carlsson suggested guidelines for an AER position and action plan in this field. These guidelines were adopted unanimously with one amendment from Jämtland (S) , and include the following actions for 2008:

- cooperation with BITS in line with the signed convention, with focus on employment and economic development (NB: The BITS participation in the AER peer reviews on tourism and the AER presence in Quebec provides concrete answers in this field)
- disseminating information on relevant good practices and BITS events to initiate cooperation among regions (NB: Members of the group were informed of the next BITS meetings in Lillehammer – Special rates for AER members for the Quebec event)
- workshop in spring/ autumn 2008
- support to the Jämtland project on social tourism (details to follow soon).

The text of these guidelines, as adopted at the meeting, is available on the AER intranet under:

<http://www.aer.eu/events/regional-policies-committee/2008/spring-plenary-meeting.html>

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Members of the group are invited to send relevant best practices in the field of social tourism, and what their Regions do in this area, to the AER Committee 1 Secretariat: e.delangle@aer.eu . Contributions in English, French, German, Spanish or Italian are welcome!

Agenda item 5- Promoting excellence in regional tourism strategies:

a- Peer reviews:

Agnès Ciccarone made a short feedback on the peer review on tourism held in Kazan, Tatarstan, in February 2008. 4 experts were members of the peer review team, Wolfgang Platzer (Carinthia), team leader, Hans Blom (Flevoland), Eric Svoboda (BITS France) and Valery Smagin (BITS Moscow). The peer review in Kazan was the first AER peer review on tourism: the methodology of the peer reviews on economic development, pilot project run by AER in 2006, was adapted to the tourism sector. The main objectives of this peer review, however, were the same as for the former peer reviews, i.e.: the peers provide, on the basis of their own experience, concrete recommendations to the host Region to help optimise its strategy and policy developed in a particular sector, in this case tourism. Ms Ciccarone mentioned that this first peer review on tourism had been co-financed by AER and the host Region and that funding sources needed to be identified, to be able to organise such studies on a permanent basis, for volunteer Regions. Further information on the peer review methodology and the activities organised in Kazan are available under:

<http://www.aer.eu/home-en/main-issues/tourism/peer-reviews-for-sustainable-tourism.html>

The report of the peer review and the recommendations of the peers are internal documents accessible to the host Region only and to interested Regions, if the host Region agrees to it.

b- Contributing to the AER Conference on rural development (to be held the day after):

Agnès Ciccarone presented the draft recommendations of the AER Conference on rural development, to be submitted for adoption on the following day. She highlighted the paragraph related to the diversification of rural economies, and the role of sustainable tourism in the development of rural areas. The representatives of Somerset and Andalusia suggested a number of amendments to the Declaration. These amendments were presented to and adopted by the participants at the Conference on 29 February. The last version of the recommendations are available online under:

<http://www.aer.eu/events/regional-policies-committee/2008/conference-rural-development.html>

Agenda item 6 - Feedback from the European Tourism Forum, Algarve, October 2007

Thomas Carlsson reported about the European Tourism Forum held in Algarve in October 2007, and which he attended on behalf of the AER. The full text of this report is available on the AER intranet under:

<http://www.aer.eu/events/regional-policies-committee/2008/spring-plenary-meeting.html>

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Agenda item 7 - Any other issues

Hakan Sandgren, Vice-Chairman of AER Committee 1, made a proposal regarding the AER webportal for tourism. In order to boost the number of participating regions – currently about 20 – he proposed to open the participation into the portal for free for one year, and for regions entering the portal in 2008. Ms Ciccarone recalled that the fees of 600 EUR asked to the regions were needed to cover some development costs linked to the website and represented a unique contribution from the Regions (and not an annual fee). The proposal of Hakan Sandgren was welcome and the decision was therefore taken that:

- all regions present at the meeting would enter the webportal on tourism for free in 2008, provided that they send their data within the year to the AER Committee 1 Secretariat. A mailing of Committee 1 Secretariat will be sent to them to explain them the procedure.
- these regions will be invited to reassert their interest in the webportal in 2009, by paying a UNIQUE contribution of 600 EUR. Regions not willing to pay these fees would disappear from the portal
- this offer would be opened for 1 year only, in order to boost the number of regions present on the portal

End of the meeting.

- ☛ Next meeting: 28 October 2008 afternoon, Linz, Upper Austria (A).
Possible focus on social tourism and the project from Jämtland in this context.

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